

Teacher Time: Implementing Preschool Curriculum with Fidelity

Treshawn Anderson: Hi, everyone. Welcome to Teacher Time. And happy Friday. I'm Treshawn Anderson. And joining me today is Judi Stevenson-Garcia. Hi, Judi!

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Hi, Treshawn. How are you?

Treshawn: I'm doing good. Happy it's Friday.

Judi: Happy Friday.

Treshawn: Yeah, same to you. So we're from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and we're excited to be here today, obviously, to talk with you all about implementing preschool curriculum with fidelity. So if you've been joining us for Teacher Time for the past several years, you'll notice that, this season, things may look a little different. We're using ON24 this year for Teacher Time. So if this is your first time watching it with us, we're going to go over a few housekeeping items, as we'll be using some of these features during our webinar.

Judi: Sure. So if you look at the bottom of your screen, you'll see lots of different application widgets you can use. They're all resizable and movable so you can move them around to get the most out of your desktop space. We'll be using the blue chat room widget, which many of you have found. I see lots of people saying hello and introducing themselves, which is great, so, hi, everyone in the chat box.

So that blue chat room widget is for you to interact with us and with each other. You guys can ask questions and talk in there during the webcast, but if you have specific questions that you would like us to address, there's also a purple Q&A widget, and we'll try to answer those questions as we can as we go through the webinar. Also, you'll be able to find a copy of our slide deck for today and the viewer's guide and some additional resources in the green resource-list icon. So go ahead and open that and download any resources or links that you think are going to be helpful for you.

The resource guide is great because it has a lot of -- The resource widget has all the information from our webinar today. We're also going to be using the polling feature for ON24, and so, if you have a pop-up blocker on your browser, you might need to block that so that you can see the poll when it comes up. So if a poll -- If we start to take a poll and you can't see it, it might be because you have a pop-up blocker that's keeping you from seeing the poll. You can also find answers to any technical issues or questions in the help widget, and you can also -- If you have technical questions about the web platform, you can ask them in the Q&A box, as well. We'll have an on-demand version of this soon after the webinar so you can watch it on demand after this presentation, and you can just use the same link that you used to access the webinar today. And we'll also be posting it on MyPeers in the Teacher Time community for anyone who wants to watch it there.

Treshawn: Yeah, and we'll tell you a little bit more about MyPeers at the end of the webinar. So finally, at the end of this webinar, we're going to post a link to our evaluation form, and we would appreciate it if you could complete the evaluation because we'll use this information to help improve our future webisodes. And when you complete the evaluation, you can then download your certificate of completion for participating in the webinar today. If you're viewing the webinar with colleagues, like, on one computer and only one person is registered for the webinar, that's okay. Just forward that evaluation link to your colleagues who also viewed so that they can complete their evaluation and get their certificate, as well.

And so, we want this next hour to be as interactive as possible, so feel free to use the chat using the blue chat box widget, as you guys have done already, and then you're going to use your purple question-and-answer icon to ask our quest expert some pressing questions. And then you'll be polling with us today, too. So hopefully everything works for you. And if not, go ahead and put it in the chat box, and we can get some help for you.

Judi: Yeah. It's great to see so many of you coming in and saying hello from all over the country. It's awesome.

Treshawn: Yeah!

Judi: I hope you all are doing well today. I'll apologize. I have a little bit of a something going on, so my voice is not completely with me, but we'll -- Hopefully I'll be able to hang in for this hour with you guys, so bear with me.

So let's talk about our topic for today, implementing preschool curriculum with fidelity. We are basing our series this year, our Teacher Time series, around the Framework for Effective Practice, or as we like to call it, the house, and this framework represents five components of quality teaching and learning.

So you have the foundation, which focuses on providing nurturing and responsive and effective interactions and engaging environments for children. That's the foundation for all learning. And then we have the one pillar on the side which talks about and emphasizes implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices. The other pillar encourages us to use screening and ongoing assessment of children's knowledge and skills. And then the roof focuses on highly individualized teaching and learning for children, with a specific focus on children with suspected delays and diagnosed disabilities. And then finally, at the center, of course, is the parent and families in our programs that we serve.

So this season, we are kind of going through the house framework. Our last preschool episode was about the foundation. We talked about creating safe and nurturing learning environments for preschoolers. And today we're going to focus on the left pillar and talking about implementing your preschool curriculum with fidelity. So, because implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices is one of the pillars that holds up the house, when we implement curriculum with fidelity,

it makes that pillar a strong support for the house. So in other words, the curriculum and teaching practices pillar is only as strong as our commitment to implementing curriculum with fidelity. So just to set the stage a little bit, we're going to talk about three things today that will help you implement your curriculum with fidelity. These are not the only things, but we just kind of pulled out three major points that will help you focus on making sure that you are implementing your curriculum with fidelity.

The first thing is just getting to know your curriculum, and many of you mentioned in the chat box the things that you do and currently love about the curriculum that you're using. It's really important to know what your curriculum is all about -- what's included, what the goals are, and how to use the materials and resources, because every curriculum has its own nuance.

And then, once you get familiar with your curriculum, you can kind of dig deeper and really start to understand the goals of your curriculum and how to reach those goals with the children that you're working with. So, this includes the scope and sequence of your curriculum and understanding how to individualize to meet the needs of the children that you're working with.

And then, the last thing is to make sure that you're continuously thinking about or reflecting on how you're using the curriculum and think about the things that you're doing really well and maybe some of the areas that are more challenging for you. Because once you spend time to think about those things, that's really where you have the opportunity to learn how to improve.

Treshawn: Yeah, so what do we mean by implementing curriculum with fidelity? It sounds like a long title. It sounds very technical. But, really, implementing curriculum with fidelity means using a curriculum the way that the authors designed it, you know, with the goal of meeting the needs of the individual children in your learning environments. And so you're probably wondering what this cake is doing up here. Well, a box of cake mix has a set of instructions on the back that will result in this beautifully delicious cake, and if we follow these directions, we'll make the cake as beautiful as the one pictured on the box, right? In theory, yes, but if we decide to make up our own rules or skip some ingredients, you know, the cake may not turn out the way that we hoped.

So we can think about curriculum fidelity in the same way. The developers designed a set of teaching practices, routines, and learning opportunities and suggested books and materials that'll support children's learning development if they're used as designed. And as teachers and family childcare providers, it's our responsibility to follow our curriculum, the "instructions" on the cake box, in order to support children and meeting the learning outcomes that we hoped for, which is our beautifully delicious cake.

Before we jump into our content today, we want to hear from you, so take a look at this poll. We know that there are different preschool curricula out there, so take a minute to tell us which curriculum your program is currently using. And you might need to scroll down to find your curriculum, because there's a lot out there. If you aren't seeing your poll, go ahead and scroll down, and if you aren't seeing the polls at all, make sure your pop-up blocker is turned off. So I'll give you a minute to scroll down and look and select which curriculum your program is currently using.

Judi: There's lots of options. Yeah.

Treshawn: Yeah, there are, and people use a wide range.

Judi: That's great.

Treshawn: Yep.

Judi: And if you have -- If you're using a curriculum that is not listed here and you want to click on that "other," tell us in the chat box what that curriculum is. We'd love to hear if there's something that we're missing from this list. Or if you can't see the poll, you could tell us in the chat box, as well. Hopefully everyone can see the poll.

Treshawn: Yeah. Don't stress out looking at the poll. Looks like a lot of people have started responding, so if you want to see what's going on, I'll show you.

Judi: Yeah. Let's take a look.

Treshawn: So it looks like a lot of people on here are using Creative Curriculum for Preschool, about 73 percent of you guys. We got some family childcare people also using Creative Curriculum. That's great. We've got some HighScope preschool curriculum out there. Frog Street -- that's wonderful. Big Day for PreK. Opening the World of Learning -- great. Galileo Pre-K Online program. That's awesome. Some InvestiGators Club. Learn Every Day.

Judi: Some people are mentioning in the chat box some other -- Someone who's from Boston, I know they have their own curriculum. Partners for a Healthy Baby, we have some Home Visitors in here. Yeah, this is great. Wow, what a wide variety. Ready to Shine.

Treshawn: Yeah.

Judi: Well, this is great. So, what we're going to try to do is to have kind of a general conversation today about implementing curriculum with fidelity that will help you hopefully think about your own specific curriculum and ways that you can think about it and what it means to implement your curriculum with fidelity. So we're going to try to start with talking about getting familiar with our curriculum, understanding the philosophy and the approach, and knowing what the components are and how they fit together. So to do this, we've invited our friend Osnat Zur from WestEd. She's one of our partners and an expert in early childhood curriculum implementation. Hi, Osnat! How are you?

Osnat Zur: Hi, Judi. Hi, Treshawn.

Judi: Thank you so much for joining us.

Osnat: Of course. I'm excited to be here.

Judi: It's wonderful to have you. So why don't you just get us started by helping us think about, what are some ways as teachers and home visitors and family childcare providers, how can we get to know our curriculum better?

Osnat: Sure. So we need to keep in mind that getting to know a curriculum is really a process, and it takes time. You and your education staff you work with may be at various stages of implementing a curriculum, so keep that in mind as I go through the process. I'll provide an overview, but, of course, you can reflect on what your starting point is and what aspect of your curriculum you need to get to know better.

So, of course, an initial step would be to explore the types of training and professional development that the curriculum publisher offers. And many publishers offer introductory courses as well opportunities to expand your knowledge on specific areas of the curriculum. So that's a good starting point, understanding from the publisher what is being offered.

But then, of course, aside from looking at these more formal opportunities, it is essential to have the curriculum materials themselves, right, to read and explore through them. So if you're in the beginning stages of learning about the curriculum, it's helpful to start with the curriculum user guide, some of those foundational volumes -- the welcome guide, the handbook.

Some have an overarching manual. And these resources will really provide you an overview of the curriculum approach, the different materials, and help you to put all those pieces and understand how they fit together. Once you have a general overview of the curriculum, it's easier to dig deeper into understanding the curriculum approach, as well as other specific pieces of the curriculum, such as the learning goals or objectives, learning experiences, and what is the curriculum approach to individualization? And I know we're going to be talking about some of these pieces, Judi.

Treshawn: Yeah. Great. So you mentioned exploring the materials that came with the curriculum. And, you know, we have a wide audience here that uses a wide variety of curriculum, so I'm sure each curriculum is going to come with something different, but if you could tell us maybe, in general, what about some resources that curricula typically come with...

Osnat: Sure.

Treshawn: ...and what they should expect to open up in that box.

Osnat: So I've mentioned the welcome guide, the user guide, as a starting point which provide an overview of the curriculum materials and how to use them. But in general, curricula provide some resources that help implement the curriculum, of course. Some of the resources share the learning goals, so you want to find within the curriculum materials where they present the learning goals. Is it a CD with a handout, a list in the manual? Is it the chart in the appendix? So find where the learning goals objectives are within the curriculum.

And then, what resources are provided in terms of the learning experiences or activities? Are these cards or lesson-plan books or activity guides or volumes? What are the different resources and ways in which your curriculum introduced you to the activities?

And then, many curricula also provide learning materials, like manipulatives and environmental signs and books. Found out what these are and how to use them. And then more specific resources that many curricula also provide, like ones to support ongoing child assessment, resources to support children who are dual-language learners. Some of it could be embedded as part of the activities and learning experiences, but other curriculum, or in addition, they may include a section or a volume that is all devoted for children who are dual-language learners with specific strategies to support them, along with resources to support children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs. Same way, it could be embedded, some of it, and some if it is allocated for that.

And, of course, to help you implement curriculum with fidelity, many of the curricula also provide you with curriculum-fidelity tools. And these could include checklists or worksheets that help you determine, "How well am I implementing my curriculum?" or help others reflect on how well they implement their curriculum using these tools that specify different aspects of implementation.

Treshawn: Yeah, and I don't know if you can speak to this now or if you want to hint at this later, but someone asked if you're -- Do you have to use everything in the kit that your curriculum comes with in order to be using it with fidelity?

Osnat: I think we --

Treshawn: We can -- Go ahead.

Osnat: Go ahead. Go ahead.

Treshawn: No, no, go ahead.

Osnat: Okay, so I think it's a great question. And when we talk about implementing a curriculum with fidelity, it's really critical that we implement the foundational pieces of the curriculum with fidelity, the curriculum approach. What are the goals? How the learning activities are designed to be implemented? Some materials offer more flexibility and are more optional. Some of them are additional materials that you can use as enhancement. But the foundational piece are really critical and should be explored well and understood, you know, to implement the curriculum with fidelity.

Judi: And I think we'll get into that a little bit more as we start to talk about the philosophy and the approach and the scope and sequence, so if you guys have questions about that, hang on because we'll get into a little bit more of what it means, really, to be implementing with fidelity, right?

Treshawn: Yeah. So thanks for answering that for our guests. So after hearing all this list of possible materials that your curriculum may come with, let us know in this poll, if you can see it, what parts of your curriculum materials do you think you need to explore more? There might be some pieces that you're really familiar with and that you use all the time, but if you want to scroll down on this poll and maybe select some things that you really think you want to learn and explore more, go ahead and put that in the poll, and we'll see. Maybe you're not alone.

Judi: Somebody in the chat mentioned that sometimes a curriculum comes with so many materials, it's kind of hard to know where to start first

Treshawn: Mm-hmm.

Judi: I like that you mentioned the welcome guide or the user's guide, right? That really tends to be a good orientation. And I know lots of curricula now offer, like, an orientation online to kind of help orient you to everything that comes in that box. I know that can be really helpful, too.

Osnat: Right, so, professional development could be virtual versus webinars and online materials, as well as on-site.

Treshawn: Right. So let's look at some of the things people are saying that they want to explore more. I think it's interesting that curriculum-fidelity tools is really at the top, and so it looks like you guys really want to try and do and work your curriculum and make sure you're doing it the way the authors intended it to, so that's awesome. It kind of looks like we want to explore all different parts of our materials. Learning goals, some people need to dive back into that overview, the user's guide, some ongoing assessment people want to do, look into, and also supporting children that are dual-language learners. I think that's great.

Judi: Yeah, lots to go back and look at. That's fabulous. So, Osnat, we were talking a little bit about how we can expect to find our curriculum telling us a little bit about their approach or what they think about how children learn and how we should be teaching them to help them meet our goals for them in terms of their learning and development, so just maybe you could just tell us quickly, you know, what we can be looking for in terms of a curriculum's philosophy or approach to learning.

Osnat: Yeah, so usually, you'll find information about the approach within those foundational pieces of the curriculum, including the user guide and the welcome guide or anything of that kind, and when you consider your curriculum, look for -- In thinking about the approach for teaching and learning, find out, where is that information that helps you understand how the curriculum support you in promoting children's learning and development in the different areas? How does the curriculum support children's inquiry -- play, child-initiated learning, open-ended exploration, choice? How does it suggest that you set up the indoor and outdoor learning environment in ways that support children in all domains? Does it provide examples of well-planned interest areas in the preschool environment? Is it the book area or the block area or dramatic-play area? How does it guide you to engage families?

So all of these components are part of the curriculum approach. And, of course, how the curriculum's approach help you to be responsive to the developing skills, the experiences, the interest, and needs of each child in your group. So it is really essential that the curriculum provide guidance on how to individualize -- how to individualize the schedules, the routines, the learning environment, the learning experiences, based on the children in your care. Think about their interests. How do I integrate their culture to these everyday experiences? How do I support children's home language or tribal languages? What support can I provide for children with disabilities or suspected delays or other special needs? So, the curriculum approach will talk more generally but then would also present its way to support children as individuals, considering all those.

Treshawn: Great. So after we, you know, figure out the philosophy and approach to our curriculum, it's also good to understand the scope, or the learning domains, that are covered. So for a preschool curriculum, what do teachers need to know about how to understand the scope and sequence or the scope and the learning domains that are covered by the curriculum?

Osnat: We know that over the preschool years and as they transition from the toddler years, learning becomes more differentiated, right? Children develop more specific skills in areas such as literacy and mathematics and science. And at this age, they're also better able to participate in extended and individual group-learning activities. So, preschool curricula include learning activities that support children in developing these specific skills in the different domains. Most comprehensive curricula cover all of what we call the seven preschooler domains in the ELOF, the Early Learning Outcome Framework, including approaches to learning, social-emotional development, language and communication, literacy, mathematics, scientific reasoning, and perceptual, motor, and physical development.

So you typically see all of these as part of the scope of the curriculum in preschool curricula. Some curricula will call them different names. So for example, Approaches to Learning may embed it within social, emotional, and cognitive domains, but it's still there. Curriculum may call the areas of cognition intellectual development, but you will still see that overlap. Typically, you'll see overlap with the ELOF preschool domains.

Yet we need to remember that domains don't exist in isolation, right? They are not isolated from each other as it happens in day-to-day interactions with children. Learning is integrated, so curricula really offer guidance to support children in all domains to an integrated approach, to integrated learning experiences. So, for example, and you, probably all of you guys, know within your curriculum how it comes to play, but your curriculum may be organized in thematic units or studies such as buildings or insects and my community or my family. These are topics that, within each, there are multiple related activities that integrate the learning across domains. So, to identify which domains your curriculum addresses, you might look for the overview material, the learning goals, and also how activities are organized.

Judi: This makes me think a little bit. So you talked about kind of the activities and interactions. So maybe tell me just a little bit more, now, of all of the things that are provided. What about those things like the learning experiences that are suggested or the book readings or sensory-table activities, songs, and movements, all of these things? What should we look for in our curriculum for how these are described and maybe how we can use them to make sure that we're meeting children where they are developmentally as individuals?

Osnat: So, we need to keep in mind that curricula typically feature some defined set of learning experiences or activities, especially for preschool, right? And the curriculum's sequence of learning experiences can help you support children development as they progress in each domain and as they move from simple to more complex skills and knowledge-building activities, including activities of the ones you have just mentioned, Judi, just as book reading and finger play and sensory exploration, et cetera.

So, preschool curricula are typically organized in a sequence. Some of them are in thematic units. Other provide different ways to build that sequence. And learning activities across the units progressively build upon one another to support children as they move through the developmental progression. So, to give you an example in the area of literacy, the curriculum may progressively invite children to discuss stories in greater detail, to make specific prediction, to use a variety, or a wider variety, of words, and that happens gradually as they move along with the curriculum over time.

Other curricula provide a range of strategies within an activity to support children at different developmental levels. And I have seen some of the curricula that have been mentioned earlier on the chat and that represents what people are using. And you see that, within those curricula, teachers can choose which strategies that are provided by the curriculum they use with an individual child based on their knowledge of his or her development.

So, for example, a counting activity may provide strategies to scaffold children's learning at different developmental levels. So, you could have it across, like thematic units. You can also have it within an activity with strategies to support children at different levels. So, the important thing to consider is, how does the curriculum guidance and learning experiences help you support children as they make progress in developing skills and concepts in all domains?

Treshawn: Great. So, after hearing how learning experiences are typically organized, take a look at this poll and let us know, how does your curriculum organize children's learning experiences? Is it by developmental domains, like social-emotion and language? Is it by themes or units or any other way? And if you have other, go ahead and put that in the chat box. Or if you're not sure, go ahead and put that, too. Let's see.

So we're getting some responses in. Most looks like it's by developmental domains. I think that's pretty common. We've got some by themes. Love how you guys are participating in the poll. Means you can see it. So, let's show you guys. So it looks like, for the majority of curriculum that you guys are using, it's organized by developmental domains. So that's really easy, you know, for you guys to look in the ELOF and kind of see how it's aligned, and that's what we'll talk about a little bit later on. And then we have some curriculum that's organized by themes and units, and then we have other, so sometimes it's called studies. Yeah, that's right, Maggie, investigation. Yeah. Domains. That's great.

Judi: Well, so, Osnat, before you go, can you just tell us a little bit about this resource that we've put in our resource widget in case people haven't seen it before? Tell us a little bit about this curriculum quick guide.

Osnat: The curriculum quick guide is a great resource for teachers, family childcare providers to use to better understand the curriculum. It's designed to help users take the curriculum and understand its different components, and it can be used alone or with supervisor and manager or child-development specialist or coach. So it could be individual or in group settings, and it really provides support to help you better understand how to use the different parts of the curriculum.

And then by understanding the different pieces of the curriculum, how to implement it with fidelity. So, for example, the curriculum guide can help you understand how to organize your learning environment, how the curriculum help you organize the learning environment, how to set up routines and schedules, how to plan and provide learning experiences, how to engage families. So, it really takes you to a journey and think about different pieces of the curriculum. It also includes some reflection questions to help you think about what you are already doing, as well as what you can work on to improve the way you use the curriculum. And I think, as a whole, it's another resource to help you understand your curriculum better and reflect on your own implementation of different pieces of the curriculum.

I just also want to mention that the quick guides is available along with another resource that's called Implementing a Curriculum with Fidelity. And it's a Q&A resource, and these are all in the resources tab. And both of them touch on a lot of what we have just talked about today.

Treshawn: Awesome! Thank you, Osnat. That was so helpful, and I hope you guys got a lot out of that segment. She's going to stick around for a while and answer some of your questions that come up in the chat box or in the Q&A, so go ahead and submit those to her. And we'll do our best to answer that. So now we're going to take a close -- Oh, bye!

Osnat: Thank you, guys!

Treshawn: So we're going to take a closer look now at the three things that Osnat mentioned that will help you understand that curriculum and use it with fidelity. So, understanding the scope and sequence, understanding how to individualize your curriculum, and then reflecting on what's working well and what's challenging. And all of these things will help you be better prepared to use your program's curriculum with fidelity.

Judi: Yeah, let's start with the scope and sequence. So, Osnat did a good -- She gave us some useful things to think about in terms of the domains that are covered, and I saw many of you in the chat box are saying that your curricula cover all the domains, or maybe only some of them. We do want to make sure that the areas are closely aligned with the ELOF domains. And then the sequence is really about the learning experiences that support and extend children's learning at their different levels of development.

This can mean the different activities or learning opportunities that start very simply and then progress to more complex as the children develop and learn. And many of you have mentioned that your assessment tools are really helpful in understanding where children are developmentally so that you can be more individualized in your interactions.

And then, you just want to make sure that you review your curriculum sequence so that you're planning learning experiences that support your children right where they are and then also keeping in mind what's next for children's development and building your planning so that the learning experiences will encourage children to extend their learning.

Treshawn: Yeah, and you can talk with your supervisor about how your curriculum supports development and learning in each of the ELOF domains. For example, do you know how your curriculum addresses social-emotional and behavior self-regulation? Your curriculum might not have the goals labeled the same, like approaches to learning, but you might find that emotional and behavioral self-regulation is under something different, like social-emotional development in your curriculum. So it's important to understand how your curriculum relates to the ELOF, so go ahead and take some time to have this conversation with your supervisor or some of your colleagues.

Judi: Yeah, and we know -- I mean, what's really important about implementing curriculum with fidelity is that the research behind it lets us know that children will make more developmental gains when we're using our curriculum materials and the strategies for teaching in the ways that the authors designed them to be used.

So take the time to understand your curriculum's scope and sequence, and in doing that, you'll gain a better understanding of, kind of, the bigger picture, the philosophy behind the curriculum's approach, and how the sequencing really supports children at various developmental levels. And making sure that you understand the rationale and the purpose behind your curriculum's approach will help you be better equipped to make sure that you're putting it into practice in the way that it was designed while also ensuring that you can still individualize to meet the needs of the children in your setting.

Treshawn: So let's look at something, an example. You might notice that a lot of your preschoolers are interested in buttoning and snapping and zipping their clothes all by themselves, and your curriculum's scope states that this area of development falls within the fine-motor development. And so, within that, your curriculum may also provide you with a sequence of learning experiences for your children to support them in their fine-motor stages. The activities and experiences might call for different types of materials and equipment, like stringing beads and toy tweezers to help strengthen their small muscle skills.

And they also might have adaptations for children with suspected delays or diagnosed disabilities. So using your curriculum scope and sequence will help you focus on the specific areas of learning and development and help you plan developmentally-appropriate learning opportunities to support growth in that area. It'll also make sure that you're covering all areas of development and not just those ones that children are naturally drawn to or that you're naturally drawn to, as well.

So now it's your turn to try. We're going to give you some examples, and we want you to think about scope and sequence. So, imagine you've observed and documented that a few children in your group have shown some interest in writing, and they're taking crayons and paper from the writing center, and they're writing down their friends' food orders in the dramatic play area, and in the art area, they're writing letters and scribbles that look like writing, and outside, they want to use chalk on the sidewalk every day.

I'm going to put another poll up. So, tell us, thinking about the scope of your curriculum, which developmental domain do you think this would fall under in your curriculum? Remember, scope refers to the different areas of development, or the curriculum supports. I'll give you a couple of minutes to think about that.

Judi: A lot of people are saying in chat box that they align their lesson plans with the ELOF, and some people are saying that they can't see the poll.

Treshawn: If you can't see the poll, you might want to try turning your pop-up blocker off. There's a few people responding, so let's go ahead and see what they had to say. So a lot of people put this in the fine-motor development, about half of the other people put it in language and literacy, and some people even put it in social-emotional support. So...Now, in what ways might your curriculum sequence -- so thinking about sequence now -- what ways might your curriculum help support these children?

Remember, sequence is about the learning materials and opportunities designed to support children's learning, so what activities or materials might support children's development in this area? Would it be putting some writing materials in each center, adding manipulatives to strengthen their hand grips, or setting out blocks for children to build with?

Judi: So this is about how we would support those kids who are starting to show interest in writing?

Treshawn: Yeah.

Judi: What would the sequence be to help support them? I see some people in the chat box are saying fine motor. Yeah.

Treshawn: Could be remnants from the previous question.

Judi: Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

Treshawn: We got some people answering the next question. Okay. Let's take a look at some of the responses that we've got. So, most people feel like putting some writing materials in every center in the classroom to integrate children's play is a good option, and maybe adding some small manipulatives to strengthen children's grip is an option. So, great. Looking at the fine-motor development scope of your curriculum, it may give you some developmental progressions in children's early writing skills and may offer some of these suggestions on activities that you can do with kids and to help them write freely.

And so, one thing to note for preschoolers is that development is really integrated, and this means that children's development in one area really influences development in a different area.

So, using this example of children interested in writing, children's emergent writing can fall under both fine-motor skills and language literacy, so if you chose those two in the polls, then that's great.

Judi: Yeah, we know that working on puzzles or using pop beads, those kinds of things all support children and their emerging interest in writing. So, let's take a minute and watch a video now of a teacher implementing a learning experience in her curriculum about giving compliments to friends. So, as you watch this video, think about what her curriculum might have suggested in terms of scope and sequence that led her to planning this experience.

[Video begins]

Teacher: That's right. You say "compliment," and you tell her your compliment. Okay, let's go over these. Josephina said, "I like when you're the star friend." Stanley said, "I like when you build a tower with me." Christopher said, "I like when you ride the bikes with me."

[Video ends]

Judi: So, as we watched that video, she's emphasizing compliments, and she's been supporting the children in giving compliments to friends, so if you think about what her curriculum might have suggested in terms of scope and sequence, you might think that her curriculum has a section devoted to social-emotional development and has suggested learning experiences that encourage children's sense of identity and belonging. It's very common to find in a curriculum. It also may have suggested experiences that encouraged children to express care and concern towards other children. The sequence could have suggested helping children to communicate their thoughts or feeling.

So all of these things, depending on your curriculum, it may provide opportunities to sequence children's activities so that you're supporting children at their individual levels. I see Misty said, "She was probably having issues with disrespect." That is very possible that this is something that came out of a certain situation or in response to a situation with the children in her classroom. And, Misty, you're right on track there, because when we talk about individualizing, let's think a little bit more about that, because the words "curriculum fidelity" might make you think that there's no room to individualize your interactions or learning opportunities to meet the needs of each child in your group.

And if we think about what it really means to individualize and how that relates to implementing curriculum with fidelity, we'll see that sometimes we really do need to stop and respond to the children and what's going on with them in the classroom. As Misty suggested, maybe some kids were not being kind to each other, and so we want to stop and do something that will support their development, very specific to the children that are in our classroom. It's very similar to Treshawn's earlier example about making a cake. You know, you might have a recipe for a cake that has a chocolate icing -- or vanilla icing -- and if I was making a cake for Treshawn, I know she loves chocolate, so I would probably use chocolate icing instead of vanilla.

So I'm not changing the overall outcome of the cake, I'm individualizing to meet Treshawn's specific taste. And we have the opportunity within our curriculum to make sure that we are not just, kind of, moving forward every day with all of our activities and not responding to the specific needs of the children that we're working with. You know children's development is driven by their individual interests, their natural curiosities, and their abilities. I mean, if your kids are outside and super interested in bugs, you should take advantage of that, right, because there are lots of learning opportunities there for them.

So, it's important, first, to know the children's development level and the learning outcomes of the curriculum, and then you can really work within your curriculum to individualize the learning experiences and the interactions that you have with the children in your program.

Treshawn: And so, we're talking about individualizing our curriculum, and there may be times where you'll need to just adjust your routine or your teaching practices or your learning opportunities or even your classroom schedules, you know, really, to fit the needs of specific children. And the Head Start Program Performance Standards really speak about making significant adaptations to curricula. However, these are just from major changes to the curriculum, like their learning goals and the scope and sequence, but it's okay to make minor adjustments to your routines and learning opportunities, so don't get those confused. And if you have questions about how to make adjustments and you're wondering if you're doing it appropriately, speak with your supervisor or your coach about it.

So, next we're going to watch a teacher as she works to individualize a writing activity for the children in her classroom. And so, as we watch, think about how this writing activity met the needs of each individual child.

[Video begins]

Teacher No. 2: Leah, I remember you said that you wanted to make a surprise for your mom and for your sister. Were you able to do that during your work time? You did? Tell me about it. What did you make for your mom?

Leah: I make her everything.

Teacher No. 2: What did you make? What was it?

Leah: It was a surprise because tomorrow is her birthday.

Teacher No. 2: Tomorrow is your mom's birthday? Tomorrow is her mom's birthday. Victor, and she made her a letter! What letter did you make for your mom?

Leah: "N."

Teacher No. 2: You made the letter "N" because your mom's name. Today you are making her a picture, and then you write letters on it?

Young girl: Mm-hmm.

Teacher No. 2: You did? What letters did you write?

Young girl: I'm going to make something for my mom and dad this time.

Teacher No. 2: Okay, tomorrow maybe you can do that, right?

Young girl: Sure.

Teacher No. 2: Okay, where do these go? Let's see, can you help me, Johann? Johann, I see that you made, like, a rectangular shape and you're filling in with color.

Johann: I did. I work on the table.

Teacher No. 2: Oh, you were working at the table, so you're drawing a picture of the table.

Is that what you're doing?

Johann: Yeah.

Teacher No. 2: You're right. The table is a rectangular shape. Did you know a...

[Video ends]

Treshawn: So it looks like one child wrote a letter for her mom's birthday, and the teacher supported that. Another child made a plan to make something else for their mom and dad the next day, and the teacher really supported that. And then the last child, he really used his writing time to draw the shape of the table he was writing on. And the teacher didn't correct him for not making letters, but she talked him through the measurements of the table because he was really interested in the square, and that's okay. It's a writing activity that she's talking him through that activity.

Judi: Yeah, and Maria mentioned the teacher shows an interest, makes connections, shows interest, repeats what the child says, right, so, using instructional formats to support both children. So, these activities that we engage with individual children. And then, also, there's opportunities for that within our routines, such as mealtimes or hand washing. This is also an opportunity to individualize the way that we interact with our preschoolers. And it's super supportive of children who are dual-language learners who might need some closer one-on-one time.

Routines are really supportive because they learn that predictability. It helps them understand, kind of, what's going on in the day. If we can use children's home language whenever possible as we're going through the steps of routines, this will help them with their language development. And then, also integrating books and materials in children's home language will help them build their knowledge and skills. It'll actually help all of our preschoolers build their knowledge and skills. So we can think about ways to integrate this into our day, into our activities, and interactions and routines.

You know, you can think about the home life or community experiences, for example, if there may be times when a particular crop is in season in your area and you want to explore the process of growing that particular plant. This is individualizing your curriculum for the children and families in your program while still staying true to the philosophy and approach. If you work in a family childcare setting, it's really important to individualize because you might need to meet the needs -- the very different needs of children within multiple age groups all at the same time, so this is going to take some extra planning.

Individualization is also really important for children who have suspected delays or identified disabilities, so you may need to adapt your learning experiences or the materials that you use to meet the physical, the social-emotional, or the language abilities of the children who have delays or an identified disability. If a child you work with has an identified disability, he or she will also have an Individualized Education Program, or IEP, that will give you strategies to use to meet the specific needs of that child.

So, all of these things together really, hopefully, will help you individualize while still maintaining the fidelity of your curriculum implementation.

Treshawn: So let's take some time to practice. We're going to play a quick game. It's a yes or no, pretty easy for you to -- if you can see the poll -- answer to that. We're going to give you a few examples of individualization. You tell us if this teacher is individualizing while implementing the curriculum with fidelity. So there's Teacher Edward, and his curriculum calls for exploring different textures during outdoor play, and it's been raining all week. He hasn't been able to get outside with his preschoolers, so instead, Teacher Edward decides to bring some leaves and stones to explore the different textures in the sand table inside of the classroom. Do you think that he's still implementing his curriculum with fidelity? Click yes or no in the poll.

Judi: What do we think?

Treshawn: What are we thinking? We think...yeah!

Judi: Oh, we think yes.

Treshawn: Yeah, so sometimes you have to make modifications in your daily routine to meet the needs of the children and the weather, apparently. But finding ways to still provide children with the learning experiences that are guided by the curriculum is really the way to go. So, let's do one more. That was fun. Oh, go ahead, Judi.

Judi: We can do this one. So, Adriana is a teacher, a preschool teacher, and her curriculum handbook says to facilitate preschoolers' gross-motor hand-eye coordination, and it suggested the children kick balls outside on a playground. So Adriana doesn't have any balls. They've all gone flat or they don't have enough air in them on her playground. So instead, she decides to provide puzzles to help them work on their hand-eye coordination. So instead of going outside and kicking balls, she's inside playing with puzzles. Is she still implementing the curriculum with fidelity? Yes or no? Oh, the answers are switched now. "No" is on the top, and "yes" is on the bottom.

Treshawn: Ah, you got to watch out. This is tricky for a Friday afternoon.

Judi: So what do we think? Is this still implementing curriculum with fidelity?

Treshawn: Let's see. I'm seeing mostly no's, some yes's. Let's see what people are saying.

Judi: And I'd love to hear what people might be thinking in the chat box. So, really, we want to think about our curriculum implementation that, although she's making an adaptation to the curriculum because she doesn't have the materials, she is kind of missing the main goal, which is to develop children's gross-motor hand-eye coordination. So while she's still working on eye-hand coordination, it's more focused on fine motor, so we want to make sure that we're still meeting the learning goals that are aligned with the curriculum goals to make sure that we're really gonna be supporting children's development. But good, this is good thinking. And tell us what you're thinking in the chat box, as well, as we go forward.

Treshawn: Yeah, so some people said yes on the hand-eye coordination but no on the gross motor, so maybe that's what most people are thinking. So, we know that implementing curriculum with fidelity takes some thoughtful planning. It takes some time. First, you have to get to know the curriculum, then you have to individualize for the children in your care.

Now we're going to talk about the third strategy, which is reflecting on how you're using your curriculum. So, after you followed the cake box instructions and swapped out some ingredients to meet the needs of your friend, now it's time to bake your cake. During this time, you're reflecting on your work and observing your cake in the oven, so in other words, you've studied your curriculum's scope and sequence and how they align with your classroom routines and practices, and you've individualized some of the opportunities for the kids in your care. Now you're reflecting on your implementation.

Another key resource in reflecting, and Osnat talked about this a little bit today, was the curriculum fidelity tools. So, many curricula come with fidelity checklists or tools that you can use to reflect on how you're implementing your program's curriculum. I always want to know how I'm doing, and sometimes curriculum come with a checklist for you to really see how you're doing. Tools like this help you realize which pieces of the curriculum you're shying away from or which ones you are implementing really well or which ones you might want to circle back to, and this type of resource can really help you be sure that you're implementing your program's curriculum with fidelity.

So when you talk to your coach or your supervisor, your education manager, ask them for these tools and resources and maybe come up with a plan to help you identify pieces that you want to work on and that you might want some support in your implementation.

Judi: Yeah, I saw some people in the chat box mention that their curriculum came with a fidelity tool, so if you haven't seen it yet, that's definitely something you would want to look for. And as you're reflecting, here's some good questions to ask. Some of you have been asking these questions in our Q&A box and in our chat box, but what parts of your curriculum are easy for you or hard for you to implement? Some things come more naturally to you than others. What might be confusing? Maybe the fidelity guide is something that's confusing, or the philosophy and approach might be confusing. How well do you think you're individualizing to meet the needs of the children in your program and your classroom or in your setting? Are your learning environments, your routines, your teaching practices, are they all really lined up with what the curriculum is recommending?

And then, it's always important to take time and observe, document, assess how your children are engaging in the learning experiences you provide and the materials that you provide. Are they interested? Are they engaged? Are they exploring the environment? If these things aren't happening, this is a good indication that you might need to adjust your curriculum.

So, tell us in the chat box, what are your thoughts about -- what might be a clue, as you're observing children in your program and in your learning setting, what might be a clue that you might need to adjust the environment or the routine or your teaching practices to make sure that you're meeting the needs of the children that you're working with?

I see some people are already saying -- Well, it's not even the question that I asked so much, but "it's hard to round up the materials needed for implementing the activities." "It's difficult to know how to modify for the children," because sometimes we have a really broad range of skills and abilities, and knowing how to meet the needs of the children can be really challenging. I see "children wandering around," "challenging behaviors," "lack of child engagement."

All of those things are really important, so if you see this kind of bubbling up, right, kids are wandering around, not engaged, there's some challenging behaviors, that's a good clue that you're going to have to kind of switch things up a little bit either in your environment or in your routines, especially as children grow, right, over the course of the year. We can't do the same thing now, in January, that we were doing in September, so we want to kind of think about how we can respond. All behavior has meaning, right? So children are telling us something about the environment or routines. It's not working for them anymore, and we need to change our approach, maybe to individualize. These are great answers. Thanks, guys.

Treshawn: Yeah, so we're coming up almost to our closing time, but before we go, we want to remind you that, you know, curriculum developers, we're really intentional in setting up instructions and activities and suggesting books and materials that enhances children learning if they're done, you know, accordingly. And so, as teachers and family childcare providers, it's really our responsibility to follow this curriculum as much as you can in order to achieve these learning outcomes that are intended. With that being said, we encourage you, you know, to get to know your curriculum so that you can be confident in implementing it. We want you to individualize the way you use your curriculum so that you can meet the needs of the children that you work with.

And lastly, you know, reflect with a colleague. That's the biggest piece, is think about what's challenging, what's hard, what am I doing well? And ask someone, you know, for support in helping you implement your curriculum the way that it's intended. Really reflecting and being thoughtful about your teaching practices helps you and the children get the most out of your day so you don't feel overwhelmed and uncomfortable. And if you look at your viewer's guide, you'll see that we've given you a few questions to reflect on about your curriculum and your teaching practices, and we encourage you to go to that green resource list and download those items to help you along.

Judi: That's great. And I really want to thank everyone. Your conversation in the chat box, I'm, like, trying to keep up with it. You guys are giving each other great advice and great tips, so I love that conversation. That's good reflection that's happening right there. Just a couple of final things we want to remind you about. You know, the Office of Head Start is supporting the Safe Foundations, Healthy Future campaign, and research-based curricula are designed to keep children safe by giving you structure for your day and offering you opportunities to reduce challenging behaviors and to support children as they grow and develop and change.

And so, when you plan your curriculum and you follow your lesson plans and the curriculum as it's intended, you really have more time to be present with children and observe and pay attention to what's going on and hopefully enjoy your time together and provide really safe and nurturing interactions. So, the goal is to ensure safe environments for children and to eliminate preventable risks to children's health, safety, and well-being. So, you can find out more information on MyPeers. There's a Safe Foundation, Healthy Futures campaign page. And there's also, in your resource guide, some links to the ECLKC page that provides resources on creating a culture of safety.

Treshawn: And, lastly, we've just got a few more resources that we think are going to be helpful for you. Of course, the Teacher Time community on MyPeers, we can continue the conversation there. There's Text4Teachers. There's ELOF2GO. Those are both in English and Spanish nowadays. Of course, the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures. And then, if you want to join us again for Teacher Time, we'll be back next month, in February, March 15th for Infant/Toddlers, Supporting Families through Transition, and then back in March 15th for Supporting Families through Transitions for the preschool-age group. Then we've got one more thing.

Judi: Yeah, and don't forget, after, when we close, I'm going to tell you just about the Celebration Week, and then after we close, don't forget the link to your evaluation. We'd love to hear from you. And do please come join us on MyPeers and Teacher Time. We'd love to continue the conversation about fidelity. And this is new. We'll talk about this again next month. But the Office of Head Start is sponsoring a Dual-language Learner Celebration Week. So that slide, more information is available in your resource tab. But it's going to be in February and will be a great opportunity to engage in some online chats, some social media posts, and some webinars that will give you tons of information about supporting the dual language learners that you work with. So I wanted to just highlight that, and you'll definitely be hearing more about that as we get closer to our Celebration Week.

So, thank you for joining us. Your conversation has been so inspiring. I really hope that you all feel a little bit more confident in going out and doing the good work that you do and implementing your preschool curriculum with fidelity. And we'll see you next time.

Treshawn: Thanks, guys! Have a great weekend! Thanks for hanging on with us, too!

Judi: Bye, everyone.

Treshawn: All right. Bye.